

Paid Sick Days Make Good Business Sense

Healthy workers are critical to a productive economy.

- If workers were offered seven paid sick days a year, our national economy would experience a net savings of \$8.1 billion a year due to increased productivity and reduced turnover.¹

When people have no choice but to go to work sick, they risk infecting others.

- Nearly half (48%) of private-sector workers—57 million people—are not able to take a paid sick day when they are ill.²
- A recent poll of workers in Ohio by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that half of the respondents had gone to work sick in the past year because they could not afford to lose pay.³

Nearly half of stomach “flu”-related outbreaks caused by the *norovirus* are linked to ill food-service workers⁴—and they are among the least likely to have paid sick days.

- In 2008, when a worker at a Chipotle restaurant in Kent, Ohio had no choice but to come to work sick with the *norovirus*, over 500 people become violently ill. The outbreak cost the Kent community between \$130,233 and \$305,337. Each year, there are approximately 76 million cases of food-borne illness in the U.S.⁵
- *Norovirus* accounts for 23 million cases of foodborne illness a year.⁶ The Food and Drug Administration now requires that workers with *norovirus*-related illnesses work on a restricted basis until 24 hours after symptoms subside.⁷ Since most food service operators don't offer paid sick time, workers are forced to be on the job sick or take unpaid time off.

Our national economy can't afford “presenteeism,” when sick workers come to work rather than stay at home.

- More than half (56%) of human resources executives say that “presenteeism,” workers coming to work even though they are ill, is a problem because they risk infecting others and may lower productivity.⁸
- “Presenteeism” costs our national economy \$180 billion annually in lost productivity. For employers, this costs an average of \$255 per employee per year and exceeds the cost of absenteeism and medical and disability benefits.⁹

Paid sick days would save employers money by reducing turnover.

- The costs of replacing workers, including advertising positions and interviewing and training replacements, are often greater than the costs of paid sick time to retain existing workers. A minimum standard of paid sick days levels the playing field for employers that already provide paid sick days.¹⁰

¹ Picky Lovell, *Valuing Good Health: An Estimate of Costs and Savings for the Healthy Families Act*, Institute of Women's Policy Research, 2005.

² Picky Lovell, *No Time to Be Sick*.

³ NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, *Health Care and the Economy in Two Swing States: A Look at Ohio and Florida*, July 2008.

⁴ CDC, *Norovirus Outbreak Associated with Ill Food-Service Workers*, www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm56a6a2.htm, Jan. 2006.

⁵ Policy Matters Ohio, *Outbreak in Ohio: Cost of the 2008 Norovirus Incident in Kent*, <http://www.policymattersohio.org/OutbreakInOhio2008.htm>

⁶ *Restaurant News*, *Norovirus confab frames contagious workers as leading food safety threat*, Aug. 27, 2007.

⁷ Supplement to the 2005 FDA Food Code, www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/food-sup.html#p2c1, October 5, 2007.

⁸ GCH Incorporated, *2006 CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey*, October 2006.

⁹ Ken Grotzal, et al, *Health Absence, Disability, and Presenteeism Cost Estimates of Certain Physical and Mental Health Conditions Affecting U.S. Employers*, *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, April 2004.

¹⁰ Christine Siegwarth Meyer, et al, *Work-Family Benefits: Which Ones Maximize Profits?*, *Journal of Managerial Issues*, vol. 13, no. 1, Spring 2001.



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Paid Sick Days Make Good Business Sense

Healthy workers are critical to a productive economy—and providing paid sick days doesn't hurt employers' bottom line.

- While no state or federal laws guarantee paid sick days, campaigns in a dozen states are mobilizing in support of this basic workplace standard. Paid sick days legislation, like the federal Healthy Families Act (S 910/HR 1542), would guarantee workers seven paid sick days a year to recover from illness, care for a sick family member or attend diagnostic and medical appointments.

For more information on paid sick days, visit www.paid sick days.org.